instruction currently indicated by the user or to change a no-mute instruction previously indicated by the user to a mute instruction currently indicated by the user.

In cases where the pushing of the mute button 82a is judged, it is judged in a step S102 whether or not a mute button flag stored in the mute button flag buffer 85 indicates a mute instruction. The mute button flag is set when the pushing of the mute button 82a is judged in a previous routine of the mute control, and the mute instruction and the no-mute instruction of the mute button flag are alternately selected each time the pushing of the mute button 82a is judged.

In cases where the mute button flag indicates a mute instruction, because the mute instruction is selected in a previous routine of the mute control, the indication of the mute button flag is changed to a no-mute instruction in a step S103. Thereafter, because the pushing of the mute button 82a currently performed by the user indicates the no-mute instruction, the mute control is not selected, and the mute circuit 88 is set to a "OFF" condition in a step S104. That is, the operation of the mute circuit 88 is stopped. Therefore, the sound quality adjusted analog audio signals are output from the audio signal reproducing apparatus 80, and the user can listen to a music.

In contrast, in cases where the mute button flag indicates a no-mute instruction in the step S102, because the no-mute

audio signals for each of a plurality of channels, and each piece of sound quality control information includes graphic equalizer information indicating the change of the original levels of the pieces of audio data of the digital audio signal for each frequency band, level balance information indicating the change of the original levels of the pieces of audio data of the digital audio signal for each channel or reverberation adding information indicating the addition of reverberation to the music.

46. An audio signal processing and reproducing method according to claim 40 in which the step of arranging each of the digital audio signals comprises the steps of:

limiting a frequency band of one digital audio signal to produce a series of band limited audio data of a band limited digital audio signal from the digital audio signal for each digital audio signal;

removing pieces of band limited audio data from the series of band limited audio data at prescribed intervals to produce a series of sampling frequency reduced data {Xci} (i is a positive integral number) of a sampling frequency reduced signal from the series of band limited audio data;

thinning out pieces of data of the digital audio signal at prescribed intervals to produce a series of thinned-out audio data {Xbi, Xai} of a thinned-out audio signal in which the